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[For the Common School Journal.]

DESCRIPTION OF A GOOD SCHOOL

No. VI.

On resuming the subject of defects in our schools, it must be mentioned, in the sixth place, that we have far too many studies going on in our schools at once; though I do not exactly accord with what others are so earnest for, — “few studies, and those learned perfectly.” I would have scholars learn every thing well as far as they go; but *perfection* is quite another thing. There is scarcely a branch which is not more than a match for a boy's time or abilities. This is emphatically true of grammar, calculation, and natural philosophy. A boy may study all his school days on either of them, and then leave much unlearned. Neither boy nor girl should linger on any one branch with the idea, or expectation, or purpose even, of being *PERFECT* before he advances to a new study. *Perfection* is unattainable. When a boy can read well; when he can write a fair hand rapidly; when he has mastered and can apply the principles of arithmetic, he would do well to proceed to something else — as physiology, natural philosophy, or political economy. It is not wise, for the sake of a near approximation to perfection, to be spending time to learn the course of every rivulet, and the location of every town, or to solve curious and abstruse questions in mathematics and the like. But the popular fault, in our schools, is, having too many studies, and passing rapidly from one to another, rather than pursuing a few to a needless particularity or an unprofitable extent. Avoid both extremes. In school, as a general thing, nothing can be pursued to its *ultimates*. Only a good beginning can be made, a good foundation laid, as the sure basis for the edification of future years.

Crowding studies into school imposes a sort of necessity on a teacher, or, rather, lays him under a strong temptation, to try to teach a great many things that he knows but little about. Of course, he must teach them badly. And hence arises one

of the great *defects* of our schools. A profound scholar may make a very indifferent teacher; but a *good* teacher cannot be a *very poor scholar*. The best teachers that I have ever known taught but few branches.

7. Our schools have suffered also from a want of unity of sentiment and action between parents and teachers. In regard to this subject, there are two extremes to be avoided. The one is exemplified in the conduct of those parents who would be ever interfering with the internal management of the school-room, and dictate in regard to the studies and discipline of their children; always complaining of rules, and modes, and forms and yet professing to know nothing of these things. It is well, indeed, for parents to be interested in school matters; but let it be an interest manifested in some other way than in complaining of teachers and regulations, and in efforts to interfere with school operations. Let them be willing to allow that teachers and committees know, at least, as much about what should be done and studied in school as those who profess, with much truth, to know nothing at all. The other extreme is, the course taken by those, who, having furnished their children with books, and sent them to school, think there is nothing more for them to do. The teacher must do the rest; he must take care that the children learn. This is not only a great mistake, but a great wrong. Domestic and school education should go hand in hand. Parents can do much, very much, to aid teachers and scholars. What if they do not understand Latin, or algebra, or grammar, or any of the modern modes of teaching? They can make inquiries, give a word of encouragement, visit the school, and shield their children from street influence, which is often a great hinderance both to study and to morals.

They can do all this,—and it is a great deal, and what nobody but parents can do. It is just the aid every teacher needs.

8. Again; a *want of interest* among scholars in school studies, both while attending school and after leaving school, is a matter of very common remark.

This evil arises not from one cause, but many. It is owing, however, mainly, I think, to the manner in which school subjects are taught and schools are governed. If schools could be furnished with just the right text books,—books that would explain the subject of which they treat in a manner adapted to the capacity and attainments of the pupils,—and, above all, if our teachings were what they ought to be, there would be less ground for this complaint. A work of exorcism must be performed in our schools. The adversary must be cast out. His name is Legion. He is seen in the thousand abuses which linger there, connected with means and motives, modes and measures, books and subjects. We see him in the unfitness of teachers; in the indolence and indifference of pupils; in all that committing and rehearsal of words which are still got up in

our schools, for effect at the examinations. If the right subjects were taken up in the right way, and by the right teachers, how could scholars help being interested? Let no one enter the teacher's office who does not carry into it a spirit of deep and abiding *earnestness*. Let all teaching, and reading, and study, and examinations, for *mere effect*, be utterly and immediately done away.

Let pupils be led to understand, at the time they study, whatever they learn; and let them make it certain that they understand, by clear and definite statements. That principles may be deeply engraven on the mind, let scholars often review and repeat what they have been over.

Let there be, as much as possible, a practical application of what is taught. Forthwith should the schoolroom be purged of the shadowy appearance of learning, which arises from the glib repetition of words and formulas wholly devoid of sense to the learner.

Let pupils be taught things, facts, principles, truth. Let them feel continually and strongly that the purpose of studying and reciting is not to make a flourish in the schoolroom, but to get knowledge. Let every lesson be recited in such a manner, as to force the conviction that the scholar is expressing *ideas*, and not repeating *words*. If scholars study in this manner, it is hardly possible that they should not acquire an interest in what they study, and carry it with them to their home retreats, — to the parlor, the kitchen, the workshop, the farm, the office; to every department and walk of human life. It is high time that the schoolroom should be purified of the abomination by which scholars, and teachers, and parents are mocked with the *show* of education without the substance. The modes of effecting this are difficult to be described, but they can be learned by examples, and examples do exist. It is wonderful what a change in the aspect of the schoolroom this single reform, the inspiring of scholars with a deep interest in their studies, would effect! It would supersede the necessity of that almost constant vigilance and supervision which now occupy so large a share of the teacher's attention, as well as all compulsory processes of education and extraneous stimulants to study. I would suggest, as one mode of reciting, that scholars sometimes give *written* analyses of their lessons, or write them out in full. It has many advantages besides the main one of enabling the teacher to decide, almost with certainty, whether the lesson is well understood. Again; teachers do not teach enough by *visible illustration* and *experiment*. Present subjects, whatever they be, as much as possible, under the idea of *visible form*. I never knew children to be indifferent when asked to look at a picture, a model, or at the working of an experiment. They are wide awake then. This mode may be easily adopted in geography, history, and natural philosophy. It may be applied

to subjects of a more abstract nature. By its introduction I am sure schoolroom operations would gain much in spirit, interest, and value.

9. Our schools are still suffering from the manner and spirit in which they are governed. Schools ought not to be ruled by a "rod of iron," nor a rod of *walnut*, nor ratan, nor whalebone, nor cowhide. These should come in, if they come at all, only in pressing emergencies. If I were to advise in this matter, I could not do it better than in the words of another. "If you would maintain order, secure obedience and respect in school, let your own deportment be calm and dignified. Enforce all your commands by a fixed resolution, in few words, rather than by speaking much in a tone of dictatorial authority; that is, speak calmly and but little, with much meaning in your manner. Avoid all harsh, scolding language, and loud talking. There is more weight in the *manner* of an expression than in the mere words that convey it. The habit of giving out orders in severe, chiding terms, of finding fault, and much talking, will surely destroy all love, respect, and esteem. Therefore have few words and much meaning. See that all your rules and requirements are wise and just; and be careful never to manifest any indecision in carrying them into effect. Never seem at a loss what course to take, but go right ahead in the way determined upon. Let all directions be absolute and unequivocal, yet expressed in words most mild, serious, and temperate. Take much pains to make all your regulations what they should be, and also to *convince your pupils* that they are such; after which, waste no time in arguing their justice or propriety. This mode of government will secure love, obedience, and respect."

10. Again; in school arrangements, the principle of *the division of labor* is not sufficiently regarded. I have reference particularly to *large* schools, and to towns where the gradation principle has been adopted. The utility of this process is one of the best established principles in political economy. I believe it holds with all its force in school keeping. Let scholars of the same age, capacity, and studies, as much as possible, be classed together. And let teachers, if possible, be employed, who are especially adapted to the branches they are going to teach. No teacher is equally good in all departments of instruction. If assistants were employed, with reference to particular studies, without multiplying numbers, we might greatly increase the aggregate productiveness of their labors. Let one teach grammar and reading; another, geography and history; a third, mathematics and natural philosophy, and so on. In this way every one would work in his own element, and, of course, to the best advantage.

11. Another evil in our schools, and a great one, is inconstancy and irregularity of attendance. To parents we look for the remedy. No slight cause should detain children from



school a single day. When parents, as they sometimes do, detain children from school to fill up a gap suddenly made in the ranks either of in-door or out-door operatives; to perform a service of no great importance, or one which might be done at another time, or by another person; or that matters of pecuniary interest, or the claims of fashion, friends, or pleasure, may not be neglected, — they know not, I am sure, the magnitude of the evil they do. Surely education does not hold in their regard its proper place. Their views are too narrow, selfish, and worldly. They savor too much of the material and gainful, and too little of the spiritual and heavenly. Let parents look to this matter. If they could take the stand of teachers only for a short time, and see what confusion it causes in school plans and operations, I am sure, from mere compassion, if from no other motive, they would no longer sanction such an abuse. But the *fact* of the non-attendance and the irregular attendance of scholars, and the *evils* to schools resulting from this fact, have been so often spoken of, and so fully and ably set forth in the reports of the Secretary of the Board of Education, which reports have been published in your Journal, that I will not further enlarge upon this point.

12. Finally, I think it is a defect in our schools to *separate the sexes*.

The practice which has obtained in some of our larger towns of keeping them in different rooms should go into disuse forthwith. Let girls and boys be trained *together* in the schoolroom as they are in *families*. This is Nature's way, — God's way, — and the more closely we follow it, the better. For every one poor reason which may be urged against it, two strong ones may be urged in its behalf.

I have thus, as proposed, mentioned some of the requisites of a *good school*, and some of the prevalent defects in our schools as they are. Many of the topics that I have noticed, I am aware, should be treated more in detail, and would furnish matter for distinct and extended essays. But I have neither time nor ability for the work. I hope some of your abler correspondents will take up the subject, and treat it as it deserves.

A word in conclusion to the friends of education. If there is any scheme of human ambition worthy the regard of the gifted, the affluent, and the honored; any that reflects honor on humanity; any that we shall remember with satisfaction in that day when we hope to be admitted to the resurrection of the just, and to be made like unto the angels, — it is the work of *education*. Go on and prosper. You are not, indeed, *settled* in all your views, or agreed in all points. But enough is settled, and enough is agreed upon, for *united and vigorous action*. You agree in the paramount importance of your work, and in the soundness of our Common School system, as auxiliary to it. You believe in the susceptibility of its improvement. Go on,

then, with united hands and hearts. Call in to your aid all available means. Go forth as a band, strong and holy, under the banners of the Lord. Do with your might whatsoever your hands find to do. Work while your day lasts. And when the night shall come, and you can no longer labor, transfer the work to other hands, younger and fresher than your own, and these again may give it over to others, until free schools of the true character are established wherever children are found to enter them; and there shall run out, in all directions, from these pure, living fountains, streams of knowledge and virtue, which shall overwhelm all the desolations of ignorance and folly; and in every place it shall be felt that there is no more need to teach every man his neighbor, for the true light hath risen and shineth, "and every man's vision is clear." P.

AN ACT RELATING TO THE DUTIES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES,  
AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE INCOME OF THE SCHOOL  
FUND.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—*

SECTION 1. In every city and town in the Commonwealth, in which it is now required by law that the school committee shall be elected in the month of February, March, or April, the school committee of the year preceding such election shall continue to hold their office, and to discharge the duties thereof, notwithstanding the election of successors, until the winter terms of the several schools shall have closed, and until the certificate, return and report, as herein-after provided, shall have been by them made and transmitted to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth; *provided, however, that, in regard to the examination of teachers for the summer schools, the visitation of those schools, and all other duties, except the making and transmitting of the said documents, the term of office of the new committee shall be held to commence immediately after their election to the same.*

SECTION 2. The school committee of each city and town shall, as soon as may be after the first day of May, annually, ascertain, by actual examination or otherwise, the number of persons between the ages of four and sixteen years, belonging to such city or town, on the said first day of May, and shall make a certificate thereof, under oath, and also of the sum raised by such city or town for the support of schools, including only wages and board of teachers, and fuel for the schools, during the said year; and shall transmit the same to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, on or before the last day of the following April, which certificate shall be in the following form, to wit:—

We, the school committee of ———, do certify, from the best information we have been able to obtain, that, on the first day of May, in the year ———, there were belonging to said town the number of ——— persons, between the ages of four and sixteen years; and we further certify, that said town raised the sum of ——— dollars for the support of common schools for the said year, including only the wages and board of teachers, and fuel for the schools.

—————, }  
—————, } School  
—————, } Committee.

— ss. On this ——— day of ——— personally appeared the above-named school committee of ———, and made oath that the above certificate by them subscribed is true.

Before me,

—————, Justice of the Peace.

**SECTION 3.** The form of the blanks, and the inquiries provided for by the statute of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven, chapter two hundred and twenty-seven, shall be prescribed by the Board of Education; and it shall be the duty of said Board, in the month of January, annually, to transmit to the Secretary of the Commonwealth copies of said blanks for the several cities and towns. It shall be the duty of said Secretary to cause said blanks to be forwarded to the sheriffs of the several counties, who shall transmit them, as soon as may be, to the clerks of the several cities and towns within their counties respectively, and said clerks shall forthwith transmit the same to the school committees. The school committees of the several cities and towns shall return said blanks, duly filled up, to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, on or before the last day of April. If any school committee shall fail to receive such blank form of return on or before the last day of March, they shall forthwith give notice thereof to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, who shall transmit such blank as soon as may be.

**SECTION 4.** The school committees shall annually make a detailed report of the condition of the several public schools in their respective cities and towns, which report shall contain such statements and suggestions, in relation to such schools, as the said committees shall deem necessary or proper to promote the interests thereof; and a certified copy of such report shall be transmitted by said committees to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth on or before the last day of April. Said report shall also be deposited in the office of the clerk of the city or town; and shall either be read in open town meeting, in the month of February, March, or April, or, at the discretion of the school committee, shall be printed for the use of the inhabitants.

**SECTION 5.** The income of the Massachusetts School Fund, to the first day of June in each year, except the sum of two hundred and forty dollars appropriated to the support of schools among the Indians, shall be apportioned by the Secretary and Treasurer, and paid over by the Treasurer on the tenth day of July, to the treasurers of the several cities and towns, for the use of the Common Schools therein, according to the number of persons therein, between the ages of four and sixteen years, ascertained and certified as provided in the second section of this act. *Provided, however,* that no such apportionment shall be made to any city or town which shall have failed to comply with any of the provisions of this act, or which shall not have raised, by taxation, for the support of schools, including only wages and board of teachers, and fuel for the schools, during the said year, a sum equal, at least, to one dollar and twenty-five cents, for each person between the ages of four and sixteen years, belonging to said city or town, on the first day of May of said year.

**SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect from and after the last day of April, in the present year; and the Secretary of the Commonwealth shall transmit a copy thereof to the school committee of each city and town, as soon as may be after the passage of the same.

**SECTION 7.** All acts and parts of acts inconsistent with this act, are hereby repealed. [*Approved by the Governor, April 15, 1846.*]

#### AN ACT TO DESIGNATE THE FUND FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE SALARY OF THE LAND AGENT, AND OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—*

**SECTION 2.** All sums of money which shall be hereafter drawn from the treasury, by virtue of appropriations made, or to be made, for educational purposes, shall be considered as a charge upon the moiety of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands now set apart for the purpose of constituting "a school fund," and all payments made on account of such appropriations shall be deducted from the amount received into the treasury from the moiety of the sales

of the public lands, before such moiety shall be credited to the school fund: *provided, however*, that if the moneys received on account of said moiety should not be sufficient to pay the sum drawn, on account of any appropriation for educational purposes, such draft shall be paid from "the school fund," already invested.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect from and after its passage. [*Approved by the Governor, April 15, 1846.*]

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#### RESOLVES FOR THE ERECTION OF A STATE MANUAL LABOR SCHOOL.

*Resolved*, That his Excellency the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Council, be, and he is hereby authorized and empowered to appoint a board of three commissioners, who shall have power to select and obtain, by gift or purchase, and take a conveyance to the Commonwealth, of a lot of land, containing not less than fifty acres, which shall be an eligible site for a Manual Labor School, for the employment, instruction, and reformation of juvenile offenders, regard being had, in the selection thereof, to the centre of population, cheapness of living, and facility of access. And that said commissioners shall further be directed to procure plans and estimates for the buildings necessary for such an institution, and to prepare and mature a system for the government thereof, and to ascertain what laws would be necessary and proper to put the same into successful operation, and to report the result to his Excellency the Governor, in season to be communicated to the Legislature at the commencement of their next session. And the said commissioners shall present all their accounts to the Governor and Council, to be by them audited and allowed as they may deem just.

*Resolved*, That to defray the expense incurred by the purchase of said land, and in the execution of the other objects of the commission, his Excellency the Governor be, and he hereby is, authorized to draw his warrants, from time to time, on the treasury of the Commonwealth, for any necessary sums of money, not exceeding in the whole ten thousand dollars. [*Approved by the Governor, April 16, 1846.*]

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N. B. The act to establish Teachers' Institutes was published in the 14th No. of the present volume, p. 224.

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[For the Common School Journal.]

MR. MANN; I have just returned from a meeting of the "Massachusetts State Teachers' Association," held at Worcester. The Association was formed a year ago, this present week. Perhaps you will recollect that two professed delegates from Albany, N. Y., named Bulkley and Valentine, were present last year. Toward the close of the session, and after many members had left, they were invited, on motion of Mr. Bates, of the Boston schools, to address the Association. To the surprise of every decent person, they availed themselves of the occasion to vent forth a series of most offensive and ungentlemanly remarks against the Massachusetts Board of Education and yourself. Whether their speeches were self-prompted or made "to order," how can I know? But this I do know, that they were



republished in the New England Puritan and the Boston Traveller, and made the text for untrue comments upon the proceedings of the Board. I have watched your Journal since, to see if you took any notice of them, and found that you did not. Perhaps you cared for them as little as you said.

A year has passed, and, as I said, I have just returned from the second meeting of the Association. More teachers were present than last year, and the parts of the State out of Boston and its vicinity were better represented. During the late session, Mr. Parish, of Springfield, offered the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted : —

"Whereas an impression exists in certain portions of the community that the Massachusetts Teachers' Association contemplated in its origin the purpose of neutralizing or opposing the influence of the Board of Education, and still entertains hostile feelings towards that body, therefore,

"*Resolved*, That if an expression or sentiment tending to produce such an impression has been uttered in any of our deliberations, we entirely disclaim it as having been expressed with any such hostile motive.

"*Resolved*, That it is our great object to advance the cause of education in all its bearings on society : and that we rejoice in every effort on the part of other associations and individuals in coöperating in the same great work."

After the adoption of these resolutions, to which there was not the least murmur of opposition, except that the Rev. Mr. Cowles, of Ipswich, protested against the propriety of holding the Association accountable for what individuals might say, Mr. Pierce, of West Newton, rose and said, —

"Mr. Chairman ; I am highly gratified at what the Association have just now done. This act of redress they owed to themselves and to the honorable body mentioned in the resolutions. I wish, however, they would go one step further. I wish the gentleman who has done himself the credit to offer the resolutions just adopted, had presented one expressing our want of sympathy with the sentiments uttered on this floor last year, by gentlemen (shall I say ?) from Albany ; and rebuking the uncalled-for, indecorous, and wanton assault made by them upon the Massachusetts Board of Education and its Secretary ; and which, as it then went unrebuked, either from the chair, or from any member who happened, at that late and perhaps chosen hour, to be present, deservedly brought odium upon this body throughout the whole length and breadth of his Excellency the Governor's jurisdiction. I say, sir, I wish greatly that he had offered a resolution to this effect."

I, for one, am sorry that the gentleman from Newton did not offer the resolution himself. I am satisfied, from what I afterwards learned of the feelings of the Association, that it would have been carried almost by acclamation. There was evidently a strong feeling of indignation at the injustice done, and the odium incurred, by means of these Albany mouthpieces ; — one of whom, after having lately commenced the publication of a series of articles in the Teachers' Advocate, against Normal

Schools, and having strutted up grandly upon the stage, suddenly, and without making a decent bow, slipped out at the back door.

Mr. Greenleaf, of Bradford, in his ardent and honest way, said he thought the men who last year were thus guilty of attacking the Board of Education, and endeavoring to put the Association into an attitude of hostility against it, "deserved to be burnt by the common hangman; but," added he, good-naturedly and significantly, "I am for pacific measures; I am for peace; peace here and peace every where; 'peace on earth and good-will towards MANN.'" (A laugh all over the assembly.)

A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

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REMARKS. — Our correspondent will excuse us for expressing a doubt about the expediency of publishing his communication. As for Messrs. Bulkley and Valentine, we have never done or designed them any harm; and if they have sought to do us harm, their efforts, being founded in injustice, will recoil, (perhaps we may say, have recoiled,) upon themselves.

As for the members of the Association, and teachers throughout the land, if we have any earthly ambition, — any desire that swallows up all other desires, — it is to see their profession elevated. If we have any earthly hope for mankind, that hope is born of a confidence that the teachers of our schools are to act formatively and beneficently upon the receptive and expanding minds of the young. For this purpose, we wish them greater emoluments and higher social consideration. We would have them stand at least on a level with the other professions, in the honors and rewards of their office. We wish to see them imbued with the spirit of improvement, wise enough and good enough to devise or to adopt the best possible measures for instructing and guiding the young. There is a principle as certain in its operation as any law of nature, by which the wisest and best teachers will rise into eminence and preëminence, while their gainsayers and antagonists will sink into oblivion. If, in the great educational movement which signalizes the present age, our humble efforts shall be found on the side of truth and progress, we can well afford to forget and forgive that species of unworthy opposition which always makes an eventual triumph more signal and illustrious.

Our correspondent mentions the Puritan. On referring to its article, published last year, we find that, after quoting, with an apparently native and true relish, the coarse and abusive remarks of Messrs. Bulkley and Valentine, and commending the Association for bringing out such sentiments, it closes its article with the following ejaculation, — "From the bottom of our heart, we bid them God speed." Will the Puritan publish the above resolutions as the fulfilment of its ill-intentioned prayer?

One word as to the Boston Traveller. We have witnessed its course for a year past, without a word of retort or recrimination. Formerly, that paper was the friend of the Board of Education, and sometimes deigned to smile approvingly upon the labors of its Secretary. Some twelve months ago, however, a teacher of one of the Boston Grammar Schools, and a member of that ill-assorted company pretty extensively known as the "Thirty-one," resigned his pedagogical cares, and became joint proprietor and editor of that paper. But he seems to have carried his schoolroom rod into his printing-office; and since that time he appears to have lost no occasion for applying it to us. We believe we participate in a sentiment which is common to all the friends of that paper, when we express our regret that an editor, in his public capacity, has not sufficient magnanimity to forget the grudge of the schoolmaster. We perform the office of a friend to the Traveller in telling it, that we never hear its changed opinions on this subject referred to, without a censure on the unworthiness of their origin. If the Traveller will publish the above-quoted resolves of the Association, we shall gladly give it credit for an act of justice.

Responding heartily to the sentiment of good old Father Greenleaf, of Bradford, we desire "peace here and peace every where," and we assure all our assailants, and enemies too, if we have any, that we close this article in a frame of mind toward them all which authorizes us to use the language of Aristippus to his brother, "Remember that you began the dissension, I the reconciliation."

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#### REPORT ON THE BOSTON GRAMMAR AND WRITING SCHOOLS.

[Below are copious extracts from the recent report on the Grammar and Writing Schools of Boston. We copy largely from this report, for two reasons; first, because of the excellence of the document itself, which no teacher or committee man can read without signal benefit; and secondly, because of the strong and laudable curiosity every where felt by the educational public to learn authentic facts respecting the true condition of the Boston schools. These schools once enjoyed the highest reputation. Recently, in the minds of some, this reputation has been forfeited, while others abate nothing of their former confidence and admiration. All reflecting and candid persons desire to know the truth, irrespective of party predilection or prejudice.

The mode of examination adopted by the committee was the same as that pursued last year; namely, by printed questions and written answers. We are glad to learn that no opposition has been now made to this only impartial and only thorough method of examining advanced schools.

We are glad also to announce that the report shows a decided advance, in some respects, in the condition of the schools, at the late examination, as compared with their condition a year ago. This is owing, as the committee intimate, to the increased diligence and efforts of the teachers, and to the greatly ameliorated discipline of the schools. It was indeed to be expected, after the more than decimation of the masters, last year, that the colleagues and successors of the decapitated would strive to avoid their fate, by avoiding the remissness or the delinquency that had incurred it. For the greater fidelity and milder rule practised by the survivors, we believe they have the thanks of the public.

It appeared by the report of 1845, that the percentage of correct answers was only thirty. This year it is fifty-one; and though, as will be seen by our extracts, the forty-nine per cent. of erroneously-answered questions, are far more than forty-nine times as important as those which were correctly answered, yet this was as true of the last, as of the present year's answers. The difficulty in the answers of both years is, that, just as the importance of correctness increases, its ratio diminishes. Instead of more correct answers to the more important questions, we have less; the proportion is inverse when it should be direct.

The sub-committee for the examination of the Grammar Schools, the present year, were Messrs. Loring, Curtis, and Allen. From some cause, the two last-named gentlemen declined to serve; and therefore, as we infer from the report, the whole responsibility of preparing the questions and making the report devolved upon the chairman, Mr. Loring. If the credit goes with the responsibility, Mr. Loring will be well rewarded.

The ground covered by the examination was so extensive that the report is principally occupied in unfolding the results on the subject of history alone. Thirty-three questions on this branch were given out. These questions seem to have been prepared with a judicial aptitude for discovering truth. They were fitted to reveal what the scholar knew of the *words* of the text book, and what he knew of its *meaning*. One portion of them could be answered correctly, provided the child had learned only the *language* of the author. The other portion could not be answered, without a knowledge of the author's *ideas*. One set asked for words, the other for thoughts. One set determined whether the scholar had studied well; the other whether the teacher had taught well. For these purposes the questions were tests, unerring, perfect, fatal; sure to display merit, sure to expose sham.

The children of the Grammar Schools are proved to have studied the text of the text books well. The teachers are proved to have taught the text of the text books well. But it seems to have been text without commentary; text without exposition;



text without that oral instruction which always most abounds in the best schools, but which, as we have been pained to see, has been so much disparaged and argued against by some of the city masters.

Formerly, in universities and colleges, the classic professor printed his lines of text with wide spaces between, to give room for the observations or interpretations of the teacher, — that is, for oral instruction, or what was equivalent to it. Now, though our text books are printed without any blank spaces for the teacher to write in, yet the necessity is as imperative as ever for exposition and commentary. It must still be understood that blank spaces of the text book are there ; these spaces must be filled up by the oral instruction of the teacher ; or, surely as fate, there will be equal blank spaces in the minds of the children. This is the main argument of the report. The evidence on which it is founded was equitably and unexceptionably obtained, and the conclusions are brought out with admirable clearness and force.

We have quoted, from this part of the report, every word which it contains commendatory of the masters ; and we would add still further, in their exculpation, that they are constrained to work under all the disabilities of a bad organization of the schools, — a “time-honored, cumbrous, vicious organization.” When the double-headed system shall be abolished ; when each master shall be held personally responsible for the intellectual progress and moral conduct of his school ; when all the furtherances and the charms of oral instruction shall be substituted for the pernicious stimulants of personal rivalry, then, and not till then, will all the Boston schools reach the high degree of excellence to which a few of them are now approximating. — Ed.]

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All education has necessarily two purposes, — the communication of knowledge and the formation of mental habits. In all education, the latter is the more important of the two ; but in our Common School education it is emphatically so. Where the early education of children is but the beginning of a complete education, which is to extend through all the years of youth and early manhood, a portion of the first years may be given to rote-teaching, and to subsequent years may be left the proper employment of the rote-acquirement thus made, and the training of the faculties upon it. This system may not be the best in theory or practice, but it recognizes both of the proper means of education, rote-teaching and intelligible instruction, and their due relation and proportion. But there is not time for the same amount or proportion of rote-teaching, in our Common School education, for in this the whole term of time is but a few years, and in these years the pupils are to receive

all the educational acquirement and training they may ever receive. Surely, then, the most time and the most labor should be given to that which is most important; and as surely, the habits of mental activity and industry, which may be formed by training, are of more importance than the knowledge of the text of the text books. For most of the pupils, these habits are to be their only means, and on these are to depend their fortunes in life, and their positions in and effect upon society. Now, the mind is stored by the study of the text books and by rote-teaching; but its active habits depend on training, and can only be formed on instruction *made intelligible to the pupil*. For, to be trained, the faculties must be exercised; and the mind of a child can no more be trained on that which is unintelligible to it, than its eye can be trained to vision in total darkness.

If the children in our schools are drilled, and not taught; if their memories alone are exercised, and all their other faculties are dwarfed by inaction; if they learn by rote,—then the text books, and not the schoolmasters, are their teachers, and the office of the masters is nearly profitless to us. They may have labored honestly and efficiently to fix the attention of the pupils on their books, and may have forced Memory to complete her task of copying words and sentences; but all this might have been done at a cost much less than the large sum expended by our city for its Common Schools. The text book is as good in one place as another, and its mere verbal study does not require our extended school system, nor its costly edifices; nor have these any such petty purposes; they are furtherances lavishly bestowed, that the masters may use all rightly, by teaching not merely the text of the text books, but the ideas proper to, and distinctive of, the subjects of the text books; that, by such intelligent instruction, they may form the mental habits of our children.

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Our children are to be trained for this community, in which the most of them are to live and labor. It is said that the age is practical; if it is not, New England is, and so is its capital. Nowhere is intellect more precisely valued by its efficiency; nowhere is the mind itself more generally held to be, not a basket, but a machine, whose capacity is, not what it can hold, but what it can do. We praise scholarship, but we pay practical science; we admire literature, when it feathers the shafts of intellect; we cherish classic learning, but we borrow of antiquity, as we do of the banks, to increase our active capital; it is the characteristic of our people to make the most of their intellectual, as well as of their other means, and their habitual mental state is that of tension. Now, the boy who has learned by rote is not fitted for the struggles of such an arena, for these require not "words, words, words," but ideas, which are the

realities of things, and mental energy, that is, activity and perseverance in the use of them.

In the general equality of men's powers, and of their advantages among us, the difference in their characters and fortunes depends more on their respective habits of mental activity and perseverance than on any thing else, and these habits depend on early training. If instruction is wise, — that is, if it is made intelligible to the child, — it excites and maintains a healthy action, and brings to enduring strength, the natural appetite for knowledge, on which Providence has fixed individual character, and, in direct consequence, the character of communities. But unwise instruction baffles the purposes of nature ; it plucks the wing it should plume ; it takes from a child his best present pleasure and his best future dependence ; it takes from him efficiency, and with it the very love of effort ; thus it destroys mental activity, and, as a habit, prevents it. Surely the law of our nature, which, by fixing our individual happiness on the proper use of our faculties, sought to place human advancement on the certainty of an instinct, ought not to be disregarded by school teachers.

But perseverance or industry of mind depends also on early training ; and instruction made intelligible to the child is necessary to its formation as a habit. That which is understood fixes the attention, excites and continues the interest. The labor that is intelligent, is lightly and cheerfully borne, however severe ; and it is only when the mind is strained to its tension, that the full usefulness or delight of intellectual exertion is reached. The difference between a play-ground and a tread-mill is not greater than the difference between a school where every sentence is made luminous by the instructor's skill, and one in which the dead letter of the text book is left to be the pupil's sole support. In a school wisely taught, the tendency of its pupils should be to over-exertion, for that way the natural pleasure lies, and the master's necessity should be, not to stimulate, but to restrain, the natural appetite. In schools where to learn by rote is the great requirement, the ferule will be as necessary as the whip is to slave labor ; and the habits of mental activity and industry, formed in the two schools, will differ as those habits differ on a southern plantation and in a New England factory.

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I adopted the mode of examination introduced by the annual examining committees of last year. I did this in the belief, which my experience has made a conviction, that it is the best mode of examination, —

*First.* Because it gives facts, authentic facts, instead of uncertain, varying opinions ; it gives facts which, when continued from year to year, become reliable statistics, by which the con-

dition, improvement, or deterioration of our schools can be ascertained and shown.

*Secondly.* Because it places the masters before the public, whose officers they are, each on his own actual results; and, by assuring to each his deserts of praise or censure, furnishes the best stimulus to well-directed effort.

And, to a far greater degree than the reports of this year will show, I believe this last effect of the mode of examination adopted last year is visible in our schools now. Causes must work long before their whole results can be made manifest; the first effect of improved teaching will be in the relation of master and pupil, and in the disposition of the latter toward his school exercises; and I am confident that I shall have the concurrence of every sub-committee of the Board, that, in the schools under their special charge, there has been, in this important point, a very decided improvement in the last year.

This is the first effect of the arduous and efficient labors of the committees of last year, and it is an effect rife with effects, and which, if wisely improved, will assure all the results for which we should labor here.

*Thirdly.* Another reason for adopting the mode of examination by written questions is, that it is the fairest for the schools and for the pupils. It is the fairest for the schools, because it gives to each school the same questions, with the same aids and means in answering them, with no difference in terms, voice, or expression, which might indicate an answer. It is the fairest for the pupils, because it gives to each the same time to answer, which in an oral examination it is very difficult to effect, and which is yet necessary to a fair examination.

Besides, it subjects no pupil to the disadvantage of temperament, which an oral examination always does. A timid child, called up by a committee man, whose authority, voice, and manner are all strange to it, and made the object of attention and expectancy to all around, is placed in exactly the position to lose self-possession and the command of its faculties; and such a child, so placed, would fail where a bolder spirit, with less scholarship, would succeed. But when, as in an examination by written questions, all the children are placed at their desks, in their usual seats, and with their usual appliances, all are left unperturbed to the free use of their faculties. In my examination, I found the schools generally appeared better in the written, than in the oral examination; and in the latter I found the attainments of one or more of the pupils in every school discredited by their diffidence.

[To be continued.]

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